

Finding Your Ancestors with FamilySearch

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Abstract: Learn about the free global resources and tools available for you through the FamilySearch.org website. From searching historical records to using our collaborative tools, this session will help you understand how to improve your research strategy, and get results.

The objectives of this presentation are to help researchers become more knowledgeable in effectively using the resources and family history tools available through the FamilySearch website; and to develop effective research strategies in finding their ancestors.

Topics that will be covered during the presentation include:

1. Family Tree: An open collaborative one-world tree. Adding names, editing information and navigating in Family Tree.
2. Searching Historical Records: Overview of historical records, and how to effectively search and filter results.
3. Historical Books: How to search for historical books. Examples of selected resources found in Historical Books.
4. Genealogies: How to search through submitted genealogies, and how to contribute to genealogies.
5. FamilySearch Wiki: How to use and contribute to the FamilySearch Wiki.
6. FamilySearch Catalogue: How to use the catalogue.
7. Get Help: How to contact FamilySearch, how to use the Learning Centre, and explain the free online webinars, along with the Getting Started section for beginners, and the resources found in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the website.
8. Understanding Local Resources: Teaching about Family History Centres.

Family Tree:

An online collaborative family tree where there is one instance and not multiple trees with errors that are replicated. Everyone manages this one world tree together and with over a billion names in this tree, it is a valuable tool and resource for family history researchers.

To use this tool users need to open a free FamilySearch Account, and then you can either start building your tree or use your choice of a FamilySearch Certified family history software program to import your Gedcom file format into FamilySearch Family Tree. A recommended FamilySearch Certified software program is called RootsMagic. The software has a free version that can be downloaded from their website or you can obtain a full version of the software for \$29.95 US. See the RootsMagic website at: www.rootsmagic.com If you want to use another software check with the FamilySearch App Gallery to see if the software is FamilySearch Certified by clicking on the footer of the FamilySearch website for the FamilySearch App Gallery and look at tree syncing software programs. If the software is FamilySearch Certified you will see a FamilySearch logo on the software program in the FamilySearch App Gallery. For syncing to FamilySearch Family Tree follow the instructions in your software program for exporting Gedcom files and syncing to online trees such as FamilySearch Family Tree.

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There are 4 different formats of trees: Landscape, Portrait, Fan Chart and Descendancy. There are navigation buttons, and a home button to help you move around on the tree and don't forget to click on the lightbulb icon in the bottom corner throughout the website to show you how to do various action in the tree. You also have options to show record hints on your tree, research suggestions (suggested areas for you to research), data problems (system will flag what it thinks are errors), portraits, marriages, and you can invert the colours on your tree from light to dark and vice versa.

You can use the Find feature to search for ancestors in Family Tree, the Recents will show whom you visited recently on your tree, and Lists will show you whom you have on watch. Person provides you quick access to the Person Pages in your tree.

It is easy to add names by simply clicking on the add fields for Add Father, Add Mother, Add Spouse, Add Child, etc.

Clicking on names will pop up the Person Card. The Person Card will provide a quick summary of your ancestor and you can access their Tree and Person Page by clicking on either Tree or Person.

The Person Page is where you can find all of the details about your ancestor and also edit information, manage duplicates, print charts, view sources and their timeline where you can utilize the map feature to see where life events took place for your ancestor. Here is a breakdown of the contents of the Person Page:

- Details – Life sketch, vital information (BCMDB), other (nicknames), family members (parents, siblings, spouse and children)
- Timeline – Shows the sequence of events in your ancestor's life, and displays a Google map of where life events took place. You can customize the timeline appearance, view tree, watch and view your relationship to your ancestor
- Sources – Tracks the sources attached to your ancestor
- Collaborate – Discussions with others about your ancestor
- Memories – Documents, Photos, Stories, Audio Files
- Research Tools -

Research Help:

- Record Hints, research suggestions, data problems

Search Records:

- Partner links (need to sign in)

Latest Changes:

- Viewable audit trail of changes

Tools:

- Edit labels, duplicate management, reporting and deleting

Print:

- Printing charts

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It is easy to edit information in the Person Page by simply clicking on the blue link word for edit and then you can complete an online form that will pop up in a separate window.

Note privacy for living person's information is protected and not displayed to the public, but is visible only to you.

Searching Historical Records:

There are millions of historical records to search through on FamilySearch. It is important to know that there are 2 main ways of searching historical records:

1. An enterprise wide search (searches for indexed records through the entire collection).
2. By geographic location (can search by location and browse non-indexed records).

You can be more effective in your research strategy and historical record searches by applying search filters and sub-filters. Both help to narrow your search in order to get the search results you are looking for. For example, you could filter your search results by Birth Year, and then apply a sub-filter by a specific century. You can add other filters at the same time. Sometimes it is better to cast your search broadly and then narrow your search with filters and sub-filters. You can also refine your search by adding relatives, selecting different life events, and residence places and dates.

Personally, I like to also search in specific collections and I like to browse through all published collections and click on the link under the map to do so. Remember, while the digitization partnership is proceeding with Ancestry regarding the Granite Mountain Record Vault, it is important to check the FamilySearch Catalogue first when search historical records. This is done because of the rapid production of the digitization project; many records are not first listed under the Historical Records Collections but are found first in the FamilySearch Catalogue. If the records are available online, you will find a link in the FamilySearch Catalogue to the online publication. Each record collection also has a FamilySearch Wiki article that you can read about which provides valuable background information for each record collection. Search results will display icons for Family Tree, Indexed Records, and Images. The Family Tree icon will show you that the search result is already attached to an individual in Family Tree. The Index icon will show you the indexed record, and the image icon will either take you to the digital image on FamilySearch or provide you with a link to a FamilySearch partner website where you may be required to sign in to view the image.

Historical Books:

There are over 350,000 digitized historical books that can be accessed from the FamilySearch website. 15 libraries are contributing to this digital project. Keep in mind that due to licencing and copyright restrictions, some digital books can only be viewed while at a Family History Centre or at the main Family History Library. The collection includes family histories, county and local histories, genealogy magazines and how-to books, gazetteers, and medieval histories and pedigrees.

Genealogies:

Genealogies are trees submitted to FamilySearch that can help you fill out your family lines within Family Tree. Accuracy of the data in these genealogies varies from tree to tree; we encourage you to validate all data. In Genealogies, this is where you can contribute a static, read-only version of your

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Family Tree by clicking on the button called Submit where you can upload a GEDCOM file format to FamilySearch. Genealogies is made up of a variety of family history databases:

1. Guild of One-Name Studies

A collection of lineage-linked sourced genealogies from the Guild of One-Name Studies.

2. Community Trees

A collection of lineage-linked, sourced genealogies for specific communities and time periods. These are merged from compiled and original source records to identify the community genealogy.

Records include specific source data, and most are part of extended pedigrees and family groups.

3. Oral Genealogies

Oral Genealogies are spoken lineage-linked genealogies from localities throughout the world. Many localities have no written records and oral genealogies may be the only records available for genealogical research.

4. Partner Trees

This growing collection of lineage-linked ancestor trees is submitted, curated and expanded by users of the various partner software applications and websites that integrate with FamilySearch.

5. Pedigree Resource File

A growing collection of genealogies submitted by users including hundreds of millions of ancestors. Entries include names, family relationships, and dates and places of events. No corrections or merges are made.

6. Ancestral File

A static collection of genealogies submitted by users, prior to 2003, including 40 million ancestors. Entries include names, family relationships, and dates and places of events. Submissions were merged to eliminate duplication.

7. International Genealogical Index (IGI)

Information for over 430 million ancestors contributed by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Each record contains one event, including birth, baptism (christening), marriage, or death.

Searches in Genealogies can be conducted by Relationship, AF Number (Ancestral File Number if one is assigned), by the deceased ancestor's name, by life event (birth, marriage, residence, death), and by relationships (spouse, parents), and by submission ID number. Each submission of genealogies is given a submission ID number, when you search by the submission ID number you can view the count of persons and all of the entries in the submission.

FamilySearch Wiki:

The FamilySearch Wiki contains over 88,027 wiki articles and is a great place to begin doing background research. The wiki contains a tutorial to help you learn about all of the features of the wiki. There is a section for new genealogists called "New to Genealogy" where you can learn the basics. There is also an

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area where you can learn how to contribute and author wiki articles called “Want to Help.” If you search by country, you can find a portal for each country, which links researchers to multiple articles and links to specific resources for the country of research. This includes links to Facebook Community Pages where you can use social media to help you solve your research questions. The Facebook Communities replace the FamilySearch Forums and forms a great networking capability for researchers searching in the like communities.

FamilySearch Catalogue:

The FamilySearch Catalogue is where you search for resources that can help you in your family history research. You can search in the catalogue by the following terms:

- Places
- Surnames
- Titles
- Author
- Subjects
- Keywords
- Call number
- Fiche/Film numbers
- Availability (at Family History Centres or online)

Remember the FamilySearch Catalogue is the first place where digitized records will be published, and then records are added to the Historical Records Collection for ease of access but there is a lag in publishing to Historical Records Collections. If records are available online, you will find a link in the FamilySearch Catalogue to the record collection where you can search and view the records. In addition, remember to check if a FamilySearch Wiki article is published yet for new record collections.

Get Help:

You can access all kinds of assistance online from the FamilySearch website by clicking on the word Help in the header of the FamilySearch website. This will provide you access to the Help Centre where there are FAQs and specific instructions for each part of the website (i.e. Family Tree, Historical Records, Memories, etc.).

For both beginners and not so beginners, you may want to check out the Getting Started section in the Help Centre. Getting Started provides users with tips and videos to put you on the right path in beginning your family history research.

The Learning Centre provides you access to free online courses that you can take which features an instructor, handouts, and videos. Please do provide feedback for the online courses so that materials can be improved.

Community is a new feature recently added to the FamilySearch website where you can find solutions and ask questions. You can find groups and pose questions or provide answers in Community Groups. There are community groups for family history research, various countries, FamilySearch Indexing, Feedback and Suggestions, and Community Help. Since this is a new feature, the depth of resources will vary from community to community depending on usage.

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Contact Us is here you can access various ways of contacting FamilySearch (live chat, email, phone, family history centres, etc.).

My cases allows users to track their cases that have been opened with FamilySearch. Each is given a case number for tracking and follow-up.

Understanding Local Resources:

Local Family History Centres. There are well over 5,000 Family History Centres around the world. What is special about a Family History Centre is the fact that you can get one-on-one assistance in getting started with your family history. In addition, there is access to free premium family history subscription websites (i.e. Ancestry, FindMyPast, Newspaper Archives, American Ancestors, British Newspapers, Fold3, etc.). These subscription websites can be accessed through the Family History Centre Services Online Portal, which is available at every Family History Centre. Some digitized books and microfilm/microfiche are only viewable at Family History Centres because of the copyright holder agreement between FamilySearch and the copyright holder. If you try accessing these types of records with limited availability, you will see a pop-up message on your computer screen notifying you of this limitation.

Many Family History Centres have their own unique permanent collections that are suitable for patrons searching in their geographic location so it is worth looking at local Family History Centres for local resources.

Each Family History Centre is supposed to maintain a FamilySearch Wiki page so if you are looking for a particular Family History Centre you can search on the FamilySearch Wiki for a Family History Centre to find their address, and hours of operations. Sometimes they may advertise special events, or even volunteer's areas of specialty.

The Ottawa Family History Centre features a computer lab, microfilm / microfiche readers, printers, and a microfilm / microfiche scanner. We offer family history classes on Wednesday morning by advanced registration only, and run a series of classes throughout the year. You can register at the Family History Centre, and further details about our Family History Centre can be found on our website at:

www.ottawastakefhc.on.ca